AUDIENCE SURVEY

Audience surveys systematically gather information about the effectiveness of CI programs and products as they relate to a particular group of people. The commander and the PAO to make decisions about management and direction of an internal information program or product use the results.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS REQUIREMENT

The PAO will conduct a readership survey at least every two years (every three years for the Reserve Components). Coordination with the DOIM for possible computer and analysis support is recommended. Additionally, AR 600-46 can provide information on conducting surveys. The survey will provide data on distribution effectiveness, reader awareness and acceptance, readership and perceived usefulness of standing features and topics covered, and opinions of the value and effectiveness of the publication. Repeated surveys will provide trend data.

The survey may include any or all of the 20 questions listed in the Readership Survey (RCS: SAOSA-223) (app H) in AR 360-81. However, surveys not using these tested questions must be pretested to ensure validity before being used in a survey. Survey respondents will be selected using probability-sampling techniques.

Informal surveys, such as those included in a newspaper or conducted randomly/haphazardly with a few people, are not substitutes for readership surveys. This does not preclude an editor from periodically publishing a coupon or set of questions to solicit informal feedback that is not statistically projectable.

Before administering the survey, the survey managers must coordinate with the agency that will provide response analysis to be sure questionnaires; answer sheets, data entry program, or any other materials are appropriate and usable. Survey conduct may be included in the command's CE publication contract and may also be contracted by the command for Army Funded newspapers, providing funds are available.

When civilian employees are surveyed, PAOs should also coordinate with the civilian personnel officer for local union notification requirements. Completed questionnaires may be analyzed by the local Director of Information Management (DOIM) to provide percentages of responses to survey questions. Where computer support is available (from the local DOIM or DRM), responses will be analyzed using a program such as the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences package. Questionnaires must be constructed using the parameters of available software.

A written discussion of findings and conclusions drawn from the survey will be forwarded within 60 days after the survey is completed through

the local commander, appropriate major command, to HQDA (SAPA-CI-PMN), Room 2E625, The Pentagon, WASH DC 20310-1510.

As a minimum, the report will contain the survey statistics, an analysis of the data, identification of strengths and problem areas (e.g., distribution, more sports, etc.), recommended improvements and changes to editorial policy, and an indication that the commander has reviewed the results.

Surveys may be conducted any time. However, no newspaper's survey report on file at HQDA should be older than 3 years (4 years for the Reserve Components). This allows for the time to conduct a survey.

A copy of the most recent survey will also be submitted with the annual CI Program Assessment Report (DA Form 510-R), unless the survey was previously submitted to the MACOM and OCPA-HQDA.

The PAO will conduct electronic media surveys at least every two years (every three years for the Reserve Components).

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

Among the more common methods of conducting surveys are the mail survey, face-to-face interview, and telephone interview. The mail survey is the preferred method for purposes of this requirement, although other methods, managed properly, may be used.

Survey respondents will be selected in a totally random manner (e.g., simple random, stratified, or systematic, using probability sampling procedures). Survey managers will select samples, which achieve at least a minimum of a +/- 5 percent reliability (error margin) at the 95 percent confidence level.

Sample sizes shown for the various reliability levels (e.g., +/- 5 percent error margin) are the number of usable responses received, not the number of questionnaires to be sent out. For a population of 5,000, 357 usable responses will accurately reflect, to within +/- 5 percent, what the entire 5,000 member audience would have said, had it completed the survey.

Experience with mail audience surveys shows that they realize an approximate 30 to 35 percent response rate. Therefore, send out at least three times as many questionnaires as are needed for analysis. Remember that incentives encourage responses.

Maybe the local MWR office or similar staff agency could provide bumper stickers, discount coupons, or other incentive for completed responses.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups. One of the most effective ways to learn how CI products are being received is to conduct focus group interviews. Focus group interviews are structured group discussions in which representative members of the audience are brought together to discuss one or more CI products or issues. These interviews or sessions can examine the effectiveness of products or programs, gain suggestions for improving existing products or programs, and determine the need for new products or programs.

The key to effective focus group interviews is proper planning. Focus group organizers must determine who will participate, and what are the

specific objectives of the session (e.g., what topics or issues will be discussed, what specific questions will be asked, what is to be done with the results, etc.). The method of selecting participants should be determined and the location for the meeting secured. While there is no optimal size for focus groups, generally groups of six to 10 individuals are manageable. Group makeup (officer/NCO/enlisted, men/women, military/civilian, active/reserve, retired/family member) depends on the objectives of the session. Generally, homogeneous groups are preferable. Often it will be necessary to hold more than one focus group session to obtain information needed to evaluate a particular CI program or product.

The moderator or group leader should be someone skilled in interview techniques and knowledge about the product or program being evaluated. It is often best not to have a high-ranking individual as the moderator with a group of junior enlisted or young family members, as free flow of information and opinions may be inhibited. The group leader must facilitate the discussion, not serve as an interrogator.

Focus group sessions should be informal. Participants should be encouraged to speak whenever they wish; the moderator should focus the discussion on the topics without being overbearing. If participants agree, it will be useful to videotape their comments for use in evaluating the session.

It is important that all group members understand that their honest opinions are being sought, and that the session is intended as a positive method of improving CI within the organization. No punitive actions should occur as a result of these sessions.